

# **Exhibit F**

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# ‘A direct attack against queer individuals’: Student protestors gather to support Draggieland, free speech

Led by Aggie Democrats, protestors gathered Thursday evening at the Academic Plaza

**J. M. Wise, News Editor**

Students gathered to protest the Board of Regents’ on-campus drag show ban and support free speech at the Academic Plaza Thursday evening.

The demonstration comes almost a week after the Texas A&M System Board of Regents banned drag shows across the 11 System universities. The unanimous vote sparked a series of statements condemning the decision from several LGBTQ+ advocacy organizations nationwide.

Draggieland, the annual drag show hosted by the student organization Queer Empowerment Council, was set for March 27 in Rudder Theater and has now been forced to reschedule or relocate. A student coalition led by Texas Aggie Democrats announced the protest in the days following the regents’ ban.



Jacquelyn Burns

Attendees hold signs at the Day of Drag Protest in Academy Plaza on Thursday March 6, 2025.

Nuclear engineering senior Kevin Pierce, the president of Aggie Democrats, opened the demonstration by thanking the attendees and addressing the Board of Regents directly.

“For the Board of Regents, we have two demands,” Pierce said. “The first one, obviously, to lift the ban on drag shows on all Texas A&M campuses and universities. The second demand: guarantee the right of free speech for all students across their campuses. No more clear violations of our rights as students.”

The Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression, or FIRE, is representing the Queer Empowerment Council in a federal lawsuit that aims to stop enforcement of the ban by claiming it violates the First Amendment. The lawsuit joins ongoing litigation against West Texas A&M after the university’s president canceled an on-campus drag show in 2023.



Protesters hold signs during the Day of Drag Protest at Academy Plaza on Thursday, March 6, 2025. (Ashely Bautista/The Battalion)

"This is a clear, clear violation of the First Amendment and another horrible blow to the LGBTQ community on Texas A&M's campus," Pierce said to over a hundred students. "Draggieland not only was probably the biggest event for the LGBTQ community on Texas A&M's campus, but also one of the most proudest and loudest examples of Aggies exemplifying their free speech."

Attendees made signs beforehand and were encouraged to dress in drag by an announcement posted on the participating organizations' social media accounts, including oSTEM at Texas A&M and A&M's Young Democratic Socialists of America and Texas Rising chapters.

"An attack on free speech anywhere is an attack on free speech everywhere," Pierce said. "My organization as well as many others in support of this group are not going to quit fighting until this decision is overturned."

Two attendees, Bean and Sierra, both of whom declined to provide their last names out of fear of retaliation, made signs that read "Y'all means all" and "Drag is free speech".

"I love Draggieland," Bean said. "This would've been my third year going to Draggieland. I just feel that this was a direct attack against queer individuals and people who love drag and love joy."

Bean said the removal of the LGBTQ studies minor and classes last year felt like an attempt to remove the existence of the LGBTQ+ community at A&M.

"I just really feel like they are trying to shut us down and shut us up," Bean said. "Especially when we have things like Sister Cindy and Charlie Kirk ... but we can't have an hour-and-a-half display of enjoyment and love?"



An attendee holds a sign at the Day of Drag Protest in Academy Plaza on Thursday, March 6, 2025. (Jacquelyn Burns/The Battalion)

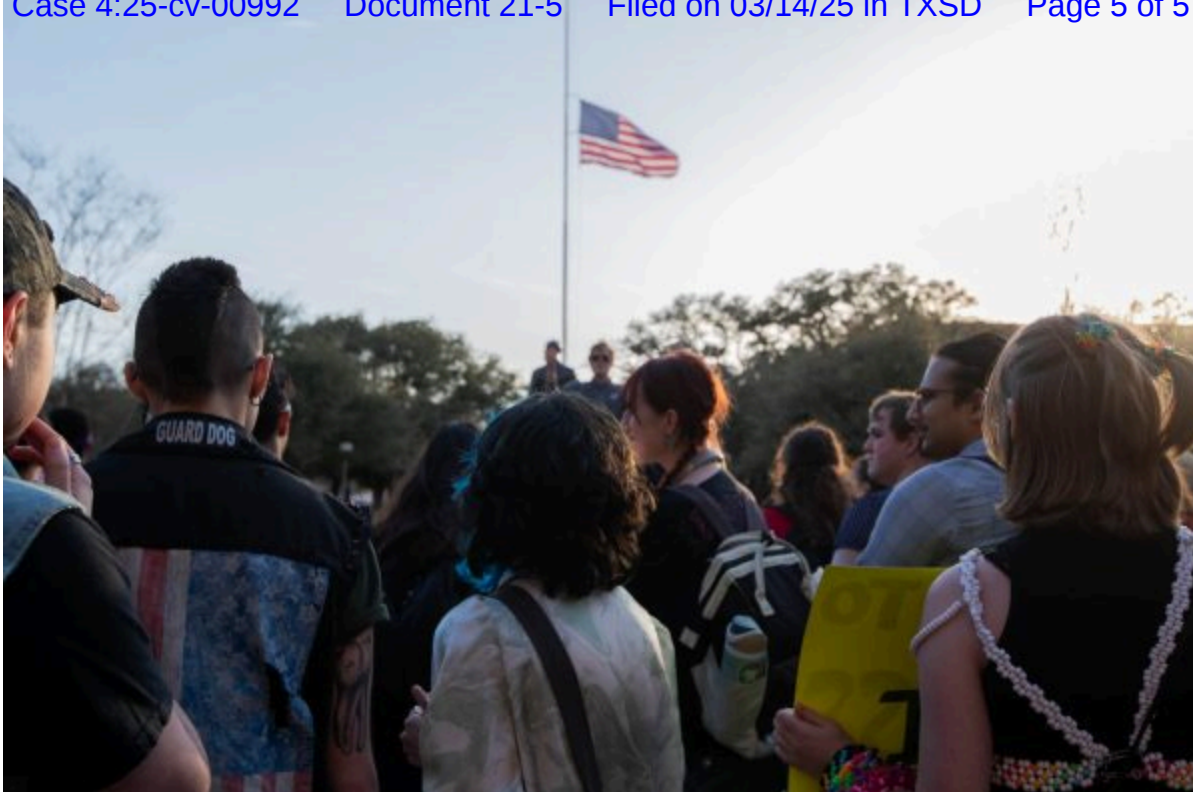
Four attendees who claimed to be with the A&M Turning Point USA chapter attended the protest and asked attendees questions while recording. Cameron, a student who declined to provide his last name, said the group had attended multiple protests this week.

"We just wanna hear what people ought to say about what's been going on on our campus," Cameron said. "... We've had pretty good discussions with people. I mean, honestly, like very productive ones and civil, which is nice as well."

Another attendee, Joe, a Christian-conservative man who works at A&M but declined to provide his last name due to fears of retaliation, attended to support Draggieland.

"From a legal perspective, this shouldn't be banned," Joe said. "It is our First Amendment right to free expression. Free speech is just as important as freedom of religion. I think we need to have an open mind on A&M campuses."





The protest ended around 7 p.m., and students dispersed shortly after.

Protesters stand in front of the Academic Building during the Day of Drag Protest at the Academic Plaza on Thursday, March 6, 2025. (Ashely Bautista/The Battalion)